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SUBJECT: GHANA TRANSPORTATION: SAFE SKIES AND FRIENDLY PORTS

11. SUMMARY: On April 11, Deputy Secretary of Transportation Thomas Barrett, accompanied by Charge d'Affaires Sue K. Brown, officials from the Department of Transportation, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, met with Ghanaian counterparts to discuss air safety and maritime port issues. The USG and GOG signed a joint U.S.-Ghana Aviation statement, in which USDOT pledged support through the Safe Skies for Africa program to help Ghana satisfy the international aviation safety standards. The delegation also met with Ghana's Minister of Harbors and Railroads, and received an update on a USTDA-funded study of Ghana's port infrastructure and potential for improvements. END SUMMARY.

Safe Skies Statement

12. In an April 11 meeting, Deputy Secretary of Transportation Thomas Barrett and Ghanaian Aviation Minister Gloria Akuffo signed a joint statement launching the U.S.-Ghana Safe Skies for Africa relationship. The statement, which was witnessed by USTDA Director Larry Walther, pledges U.S. technical support and training to assist Ghana in satisfying the international aviation safety standards and regain FAA Category I status, should a Ghanaian commercial air carrier wish to serve the U.S. (Note: Ghana lost Category I status following a negative FAA assessment of a previous national carrier. A new public-private airline partnership has been formed following the bankruptcy of the earlier airline. End Note.) Minister Akuffo expressed appreciation, and noted that the creation of a separate Ministry demonstrated the GOG's commitment to improving aviation. USTDA Director Walther added that USTDA was launching an "Africa Trade Lanes Partnership" initiative, which would include a later mission to Ghana.

14. In the meeting with Minister Akuffo, and a subsequent discussion with Minister for Harbors and Railroads Ameyaw-Akumfi, D/S Barrett stressed the need for Ghana to maintain conditions necessary to encourage development, including political stability and an environment which discouraged corruption and the illegal drug trade. Minister Akuffo described efforts to curtail drug flows through Ghana's main international airport, citing cooperative efforts with the UK Government and others. (Note: Ghana is increasingly a transshipment point for cocaine and heroin entering Europe and the United States. The USG is contributing to interdiction efforts through training and equipment. End Note.)

Ghana's Ports Receive Needed Attention

15. In their subsequent meeting with Ghanaian Minister of Ports and Railroads Ameyaw-Akumfi, the delegation discussed potential improvements in inter-modal transport (rail, road and maritime). D/S Barrett stressed the need for Ghana to maintain competitive transportation rates. The Minister acknowledged the importance of maritime safety and security, and noted support to Ghana from the U.S. Coast Guard. MCC Vice President Maureen Harrington said that agricultural production improvements through Ghana's MCC program will increase demands on the ports, and that the program will provide funds for highway improvements and two additional ferries on Lake Volta.

¶6. At the Port of Tema (near Accra) Jens Korsgaard of Halcrow Engineers, PE, of New York (which has received a \$698,000 award from USDATA to study Ghana's ports), briefed the delegation on feasibility studies that will lead to master plans to expand the capacities of both Tema and the eastern port of Takoradi, and will include environmental assessments and market forecasts. Both ports are currently limited in the size of vessel they can accommodate.

¶7. When asked whether efficiencies in port management could be accomplished without new infrastructure, Korsgaard noted that institutional improvements were possible but declined to provide specifics due to the early nature of the project. Additional facilities will be needed in the already constrained Takoradi port to accommodate oil recovery from recent off-shore finds. In attempting to position Ghana as a regional freight hub, Minister Ameyaw-Akumfi outlined efforts to bring down costs and make the ports friendlier to business. (Note: Ghana's MCA program includes improvements in highway infrastructure to the port, which should reduce congestion. End Note.) The delegation concluded its visit by touring the Tema port facilities, including a new container port and a recently completed food terminal intended to facilitate non-traditional exports.

¶8. This cable was cleared by. Susan McDermott, DAS for Aviation and International Affairs.

Brown